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ABSTRACT

The relationship between boards of education and school administrative personnel has been eroding, with some middle management personnel forming their own bargaining groups. It is the author's opinion that universal collective bargaining rights for administrators will prove to be tragic for education. He therefore supports involvement for principals, supervisors, and other midlevel administrators in policy-making. He advocates separating policy and procedural issues from salary issues, a goal that can be accomplished by creating two committees, one to consider each area. The goal is to establish a climate between board members and administrators that emphasizes mutual respect and understanding. (Author)

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SPEAKER Burk, James M. CLINIC NO. E&B PROGRAM p47

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE BOARD - ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

It is my belief that the concept of a board - administrative team, as desirable as it may be, is in serious difficulty throughout the nation. It is most distressing to be an observer to such a circumstance, especially since I have been advocating a management or leadership team for almost ten years.

Our organization, the American Association of School Administrators, has constantly by resolution espoused the need for effective relationships between administrators and boards of education. All of you should know that there is a joint AASA-NSBA Committee working on guidelines to improve relationships.

Another resolution of the Association calls for the establishment of viable administrative teams.

Why is the management team important?

Anyone who has briefly reviewed what is happening on the education scene is well aware of the organizational force of the educational associations and unions as well as the working relationships developing within these groups and all public employees generally. If this were not enough, we ought also look with concern to the substantial activities initiated by unions and associations to enroll the college teachers of teachers and administrators.

While all this is continuing to grow we are still dragging our feet in putting together an organization that will meet the challenge and be a dynamic force on behalf of the young people of our nation.

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Should Boards and Superintendents be concerned? The following brief excerpt from the February 15, 1977, issue of Educators Negotiating Service focuses on the problem quite succinctly.

"High School principals are growing increasingly favorable to a collective bargaining unit of their own. At the recent convention of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, a great deal of interest was evident in collective bargaining, (yet several speakers pointed out cautionary notes).

According to a recent NASSP survey, 50 per cent of their membership favor collective bargaining for principals, almost 30 per cent are opposed, and the remainder haven't decided. According to national estimates, principals are currently 29 per cent organized into bargaining units. Principals tend to feel they are being left out. Said, Norman Barea, a principal from Springfield, Michigan, 'Let's stop accepting the leftovers from other negotiated agreements.' Many espoused a feeling of dissatisfaction in terms of money and an isolation from the management team".

While the above quote referred to secondary administrators, I believe it applies equally to elementary principals.

You, as Board Members, should be aware of the attempt to woo administrators into new kinds of union relationships. Not only are state education associations attempting to get administrators back into the fold, but the Teamsters and other kinds of unions are beginning to court them too.

If further evidence is needed to convince boards of a deteriorating relationship it can be found in two articles appearing in the January, 1976 issue of the American School Board Journal.

There are rumblings throughout the administrative structure. Some states have already given bargaining rights to administrators. Bills to do the same for administrators in other states are already in the legislative hopper. The School Board Journal article reported that 86 per cent of the principals who responded to their survey favored state laws that guarantee administrators the right to bargain directly with boards.

Almost a year ago I appeared before our Pennsylvania House Education Committee in opposition to bargaining rights for school administrators.

While testifying I was sharply reminded by one of the Legislators that they had many reports from throughout the State about how poorly principals were being treated. The same Legislator went on to indicate that the Legislature would not stand idly by and see Boards and Superintendents continue to ride roughshod over middle management. I believe, with or without legislative assistance, one can safely assume that administrators are not going to remain passive much longer and continue to take it on the chin. It is my opinion that universal collective bargaining rights for administrators will prove to be tragic for education.

So my rhetorical question to you is, "What are you doing about your administrators and how are you treating them"?

Often times the first issue raised when Boards begin to discuss administrative relationships is how to get rid of the "dead wood on the staff." No one really defines what this is yet everyone insists that it

has to go before anything else can be done. A second comment is, "We'll pay them what they're worth if we can find out what it is." "Let's do it like industry," is another favorite comment. It is not my intent to catalogue a list of comments. I'm certain that many of you have your own separate list.

The usual procedure in starting a working relationship is to form committees. Almost at the outset principals begin to participate in a long series of meetings intent on establishing goals and objectives. Sometimes, either early or late, an expert, often a local university professor who hasn't had a direct acquaintance with an ongoing educational program for years, is brought on the scene to assist. This also entails a large number of meetings. In the meantime the operation is allowed to tread water. On occasion a retired superintendent, who wasn't able to solve any of the problems when he was active that he is now an expert in, is thrown into the mix. Soon performance appraisal schemes and ill defined management by objective packages are prepared and put into a nice neat booklet. The work is completed and the system is to be operating smoothly and efficiently forevermore. Don't bet on this because someone will soon ask, "but where is the money?"

By the way, when these schemes were first proposed to administrators it was with the intent of improving the effectiveness of the system and the overall quality of education. It's only after the grand design is put together that the administration learns that it will serve as the basis for future salary

Increases,if any money is left after the demands of the teachers have been met.

Now I submit that what I have just described may be somewhat overexaggerated in many cases. However, from a number of meetings I have participated in over the years it isn't too far fetched.

If there is even a molicum of accuracy in the statements, is there little wonder about why we are having some difficulty in bringing school board members and administrators together.

In describing a particular scene I would not denounce the importance of goal setting or even the establishment of an effective system of management by objectives. My suggestion is to start from where you are in a most positive way. Be honest, be sincere and be fair.

Peter Drucker, in Management (1974), stated: "A manager (Board and Superintendent) who starts out with the assumption that people are weak, irresponsible, and lazy will get weakness, irresponsibility, and laziness. He corrupts. A manager (Board and Superintendent) who assumes strength, responsibility, and desire to contribute may experience a few disappointements. But the manager's first task is to make effective the strength of people, and this he can do only if he starts with the assumption that people---and especially managers and professional contributors---want to achieve" (p. 44) and I would further add, be successful.

Drucker later states that, "What every enterprise needs is a principle of management that will give full scope to individual strength and responsibility, as well as common direction to vision and effort, establish team work, and

harmonize the goals with the Commonwealth." (p. 442)

It is my feeling that the two short paragraphs from Drucker's work could serve as the primary underpinning for a group determined to establish a viable board-administrative team.

Despite the problems we may encounter, I believe the local school board, superintendent, principals, and supervisors must work closely together as a team to meet the complex challenges of education today. There can be no alienation within this structure through bickering or bargaining if education is to be more viable and responsive to the many demands of society.

In this presentation I could stress the importance of involving all administrators and supervisors in policy decisions, regulations, financial matters and collective bargaining. It goes without saying that if you haven't moved very far in involving administrators on a number of these areas you are in trouble already.

Undoubtedly there are a number of school districts that may claim to have moved far toward the establishment of viable board-administrative teams. Many probably aren't quite as far as they may believe. Frequently our district has been cited as having a good board-administrative team. Several of our administrators have given testimoney at association meetings and at university courses about the desirable and effective environment we have established. For a number of years, through various techniques, we have attempted to get administrators involved in a host of assignments. At times the involvement was supplemented with board-administration seminars. The

foundation to all the involvement, however, is strong administrative and board support for decisions compiled with a respectable salary commitment. However, I felt that despite our positive beginning a new format is required. What then is happening in our district that is aimed at not only continuing a reasonably good relationship but also to make it better and more responsive? In a memo to the Board earlier in the year it was proposed that we again attempt to establish a plan that will not only meet our needs, but also have our administrative and supervisory staff feel more strongly about their importance in the organization. It was stated that despite our efforts in the past few years, we appear to have fallen below what our administrative and supervisory personnel feel is a viable and meaningful relationship that not only reflects on economics, but also on their role as school managers and educational leaders. None of the previous plans, however nobly conceived, were designed to frustrate the process. Nevertheless that appeared to be the outcome. Our plan became unworkable because meetings were all-inclusive. It is quite difficult to mix discussions on salary issues with the overall operation of the school system. Two committees - one responsible for procedural matters and the other for economics have now been established with the hope of correcting some of our earlier difficulties.

It was by design that the procedural committee was not called a policy committee. The primary purpose of this committee is to establish an objective, open-minded dialogue between the Board and the Administrative Staff. It also attempts to identify areas of concern that both groups may have.

Without attempting to spell out in detail what the Procedural Committee might

review, the following items would be respresentative of the kind of concerns that committee handles:

1. Board-administrator contacts on various issues or problems.
2. System-wide support by Board and Superintendent for various decisions.
3. The development of specific in-service programs to meet the needs of administrative and supervisory personnel.
4. A plan for the establishment of administrative goals and objectives with a formal follow-up evaluation plan.
5. The extent of administrative involvement in Collective Bargaining and Meet and Discuss sessions.
6. A system for assuring administrative involvement in the total decision-making process.
7. The determining of building and/or district-wide needs.
8. Plans for suggesting policy and the overall structure of the management organization.

The primary purpose of the Economic Committee is to review and develop various economic items as they relate to the administrative and supervisory staff. The group not only concerns itself with what is being expended, it also attempts to determine how. The following items were offered initially to serve as a beginning for discussions:

1. Salary plan - The following factors were suggested in discussion on salary: Responsibility, Length of Service, Educational Background, Size of Student Body and Staff, and Personal Performance.

2. Fringe Benefits - This area includes all those items currently provided with an assessment of their importance along with an overall evaluation of proposals for improvements, deletions, or additions.

3. While there may be some overlap with the efforts of the Procedural Committee, it was suggested that attention be given to the whole management function.

The above was a brief explanation of how one school system is attempting to establish a climate between board members and administrators which emphasizes mutual respect and understanding. A number of school districts are undoubtedly more advanced in the process than we are. Over the years we have attempted many kinds of programs. Some are continuing. Others have either been modified or eliminated.

Despite what we have been doing there is a feeling that it isn't enough or at least meeting our needs. So now we are attempting new approaches. I don't feel there is one correct answer for all of us.

As you know schools are complex organizations and the tasks of an educational administrator are correspondingly numerous and intricate. You have only to look at the format of your convention program to discern the accuracy of this statement. Very few of the issues identified could be ignored by even the smallest school system.

Board and administrative management configurations are important. How adequately we do our job in establishing these patterns may very well determine the course of public education in our nation. In fact, it may even determine whether or not our system of public schools controlled by local boards of education even survive.